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ABSTRACT

This discussion entails some notions on the nature of creativity, the process of authentic risk-taking, and the person of the counselor in creating and taking risks. Technique is the impediment to creativity in counseling. The person who functions as an effective counselor functions from within, relying on the same resources from which flows creation. Since this process is not intellectual, or cognitive, the process of creation is intimately involved with risk-taking. In group experiences, the counselor must be a part of the group himself. The emergence of group activities has been directed at providing personal growth experiences, and the counselor must take up the task of creating a situation where these goals might be achieved. The Problem-Reactive Approach is presented as the looking for a problem and then reacting to it. Most counseling centers operate on the "repair" basis. The proactive approach involves everyone, its primary function being to aid the development of more fully functioning whole persons. Counselors must take this responsibility and become an integral part of education, dedicated to the development of competent and complete human beings. (KJ)

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Personal Growth as a Theoretical Orientation

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While in the process of contemplating what I would say in this paper and how I would say it, a colleague dropped into my office with a final examination he was about to administer to his Abnormal Psychology class. The first question (as you may have guessed) was "Define abnormality, and normality as the terms are typically used by various psychologists." The experience set off in me a number of reflections I have often considered but seldom verbalized.

What is this peculiar obsession we professional counselors and psychologists have developed concerning "abnormal"? I know of no curriculum that sponsors courses in "abnormal chemistry", "abnormal biology", or "abnormal education". Yet is has been my experience that not only does every psychology department have its abnormal psychology course, but usually the abnormal course that is offered is a senior level, high-prestige course. I know of no graduate program in counseling or psychology that does not demand its applicants to complete at least one course in abnormal psychology. This leads me to think we have developed some rather "abnormal" attitudes about abnormal behavior.

The rationalization is usually offered that counselors must be competent at recognizing pathology; that we must be sensitive to "abnormalities," and that we must be cautious about treating neurotic or psychotic persons lest we "increase the sickness." The problem is deeper than that. The fact of the matter is that we have espoused a whole attitudinal orientation surrounding the abnormality model; and we have developed professional activities, professional models, and even theories of human behavior that support and propagate these attitudes.

The process orientation to counseling and psychotherapy suggests that change does not occur as an isolated single event. Rather, change occurs as an emerging direction, not based on a single event, but upon an unfolding interaction of beliefs, feelings, and behaviors. When this notion is applied to institutions, then it can be seen how the acceptance of an "abnormal" orientation will lead to certain professional attitudes and behaviors quite different from those attitudes and behaviors flowing from an alternative model. We espouse a "growth model" of human behavior, and the kinds of professional attitudes and behaviors that result is the topic of this program. I shall attempt to state in this presentation, some of the attitudes and associated professional behaviors, that result from an allegence to an "abnormal", or the "growth" orientation in the provision of counseling services.

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The Problem-Reactive Approach

In our culture, the structure of expectations surrounding counseling services is chiefly involved with problem cases. I suggest that an appropriate definition for the word problem is deviation from expectations. For example, when we say a student has a problem with grades, we are saying his attitudes or performance related to grades is not meeting our or his expectations. Similarly when we say that the student has a problem with his parents, we are in fact suggesting that his relationship with his parents is not in line with our expectations of a parent-child relationship. The reader may see the parallel here between "problem" and "abnormal." Briefly the theory is that people deviate from either some external statistical norm or some internal expectation. In either case the deviation is the problem or abnormality. In counseling and psychotherapy, the focus in the past has been almost exclusively on the deviation, or problem. This has resulted in a consequence of a whole profession directing its energies toward "problems". The medical model of diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment has served as paradigm for practice. However, the rules that worked so well in physical medicine, e.g. isolate and describe the disease entity--problem--and then prescribe appropriate palliatives has not worked so well in dealing with the human condition. And so the medical model has come under attack. But the enemy is not the medical model. The enemy is the process of searching for the abnormal; the process classification of deviancies; the process of waiting for a problem to occur, and only then reacting to it, the process of ministering the weaknesses.

This reactive pattern is in fact, a generating source for the very existence of university counseling services. During recent decades, universities have found themselves dealing with an "abnormality". This abnormality or problem has emerged in such forms as larger numbers of students seeking to explore their vocational ambitions, larger number of students requesting counseling, and larger number of students expressing a dissatisfaction with their life situation. And true to form, universities have <u>reacted</u>, by forming counseling services. Such counseling centers have in turn been almost exclusively <u>reactive</u> in their operations. Professional persons in such counseling services tend to confine themselves to their offices and wait for students to seek them out or be referred to them, and then see them usually on a one to one basis. Because the center's function is to deal with "problems," the role of the center is usually perceived as peripheral to primary goals of the university. That is, the counseling center is seen as a passive, adjustive, remedial agency to which problems and problem students are referred. The administrative expectation of the center is thus to focus on problems (diagnose) and try to solve them (<u>react</u>).

I submit that this approach to counseling services is the abnormality orientation acted out. In other words, the counseling center is the university repair shop to which broken students or other blow-outs are sent for repair. This perception of counseling services has been verified by a number of research surveys (Clark, 1966, Nugent & Pareis, 1968;

Magoan, 1968) which show that counselor-student ratios average from 800 to 2000 students per counselor; that usually less than 10 per cent of the student body make use of the counseling services (including testing programs); that less than one of four centers are involved in programs outside of counseling center offices; and that less than one out of ten counseling centers are involved in consultation, program planning or development, or other forms of human relations training.

The fact of the matter is that counseling centers have their history rooted in a problem-reactive approach, and they have tended to hold closely to this problem-reactive orientation in their provision of services. The present state of affairs is such that the functioning of counseling centers itself has become a "problem." Counselors have expectations of themselves to be helping persons. Yet these same counselors come to conventions like this to complain about heavy caseloads, about "problem students" who refuse to act like good clients should act, about problem administrators who won't let them do what they want to, and about the university community itself which has become a "problem." These same counselors then return home to their own center to try to "diagnose" the problem of why they're not doing enough, to try to analyse the "problem" of their own inefficiency in "getting through" to enough students, and to try to be reacting to all of the ensuing problems.

The point I am trying to make is this: We are much like the tiger chasing its own tail. We have started with an attitude that our function is to solve problems and then waited for the problems to come to us so we might apply our "preconceived solutions" (counseling and psychotherapy). The problems have come and we have reacted, and we are being very busy throughout our appointment-laden work-days. However, there remains a hitch. Most counselors I have spoken with, and most concerned persons I have known, and I myself, have to deal with that ever-present voice that is forever on the verge of my consciousness. It screams:

YOU AREN'T DOING ENOUGH.

A Proactive Approach

Let us consider for a moment what it is like to be human: What it is like to be alive: what it is like to be who I am. There is not a day that goes by that I do not experience anxiety, that I do not experience anger that I do not know quite what to do with, that I do not wonder about myself and where I've been, where I'm at, where I'm going. Does that make me different from you? Sometimes my personal feelings get so much in my way that I don't do the things I want to do, that I stew in my own conflict, and feel overridden by "should I; I can't, etc." Does this make me different from you? In thinking about my life I find there have been times that I was so heavily involved with my own feelings that my day-to-day activities were disturbed. But somehow I mastered those situations, and in fact feel good about myself having mastered them. Does this make me different from you? When I examine myself, I find that there are many things that confuse me, and I would like to clarify them: There are many

things that upset me and I want to master them: there are many feelings that disrupt my personal and interpersonal functioning and I want to learn how to better deal with these feelings. This clarification, this mastering of experiencing, this more comfortably dealing with my feelings, this increased competence in my personal and interpersonal relationships, I refer to as "growth." I want to grow. Does this make me different from you?

Most persons, perhaps all of us, share and experience this need to grow. Yet, where and how can this need be actualized? In our society education has provided and, in some instances still purports to provide growth experiences. It is not coincidental that the proliferation of counseling services has exactly paralleled the functional failure of colleges and universities to provide personal growth experiences. In the schedule-oriented, lecture-dominated, course-content diploma mills that our universities have become in recent decades, there are few opportunities for most college students to explore their own potential for being human. Rather than education being a growth experience in personal competence, it has become a relatively sterile and (I used the term intentionally) irrelevant pursuit of graduation requirements.

The major challenge confronting counseling and all of the helping professions today is to discover and implement new and more effective procedures for facilitating human growth and development. However, to accept this challenge, counseling professionals are going to have to switch gears from the traditional problem-approach of the past. In too many instances, counseling centers have <u>reacted</u> to the "problem" which historically generated their very existence by prolonging and perseverating that problem. In serving the university as a remedial agency to "adjust" students to the demands of "graduation requirements," and in being the repair shop for the mal-contents and maladjusted, counseling centers have done little or nothing to alleviate the conditions they were founded to change.

We propose a new model for counseling center activities. We reject the "repair shop" model and suggest that the university counseling service move into the mainstream of the lives of the students and the community called university. Simplistically stated, we believe that if any person (student, faculty, administrator, or staff) is associated with a university, and cannot utilize <u>in his own life</u>, in his own work, and in his own way, the services provided by the university counseling center, it is because that counseling center is not doing enough. We feel that the primary function of a counseling center is the development of more fully functioning whole persons. Such an agency has the goal of expanding human awareness, and experiencing the maximum development of each person's full human potential within the college setting. This human-development counseling service, or growth center, should be staffed by competent professional people with a humanistic orientation who would attempt to convert the educational-social system into a growth-enhancing community. In addition to the reactive practices and functions of present counseling services (i.e. assistance in making educational and vocational choices, crisis

counseling, and psychotherapy) the growth centers' primary thrust would be proactive. It would reach out into the university community and find ways to reduce the depersonalization, alienation, and mechanization of college life.

In developing and fostering feelings of intimacy, relatedness, and community, the growth center would truly enhance and supplement the learning process called "a college education." Proactive programs might consist of a wide variety of group activities designed to help participating members to increase their awareness of themselves, their relationships, and their environment, to heighten their sensitivity, to experience transcendent behaviors, and to free their creative potential.

We have listed a number of more specific experiential goals of a university growth center (Foulds M, and Guinan J, 1969). The kinds of programs sponsored by the growth center would be designed to:

(a) create and discover new and more satisfying goals, values and commitments.
(b) open and experience the process of self-exploration and self-development.
(c) increase creativity, productivity, and imagination.
(d) increase awareness of responsibility and self-determination
(e) increase self esteem and feelings of self regard, leading to more productive and fulfilling life styles.
(f) create learning experiences based upon uncertainty, ambiguity, and a sense of tentativeness regarding decisions and commitments.
(g) facilitate personal and interpersonal openness and authenticity.
(h) facilitate sensitivity to ones own inner world of experience, one's own inner voices and one's own inner wisdom.
(i) enhance and focus an awareness of one's sensory system.
(j) allow persons to learn to receive and send more clearly the signals and communications of feelings.
(k) facilitate a contact with the here and now.
(l) increase flexibility in ways of living with and relating to others.
(m) increase the capacity to be intimate to be fully related, to love.
(n) focus upon the continuous search for personal identity and personal meaning.
(o) resensitize and reawaken an awareness of the body.
(p) break down barriers, and learn to effectively cope with the full range of experience.
(q) liberate and increase personal freedom.

In addition to these facilitative service functions, the growth center would recognize the necessity for involvement in rigorous programs of education and research. The triadic relationship of service, education and research would not be seen as competitive or exclusive, but rather complementary. Thus the center would provide a broad spectrum of psychological (remedial, developmental, preventative, and educative) and

consultative services (to faculty, staff, administration, and students, and university groups and organizations); educative functions by providing programs and facilities for graduate education in counseling, psychology, and related specialties; programs of evaluative and experimental assessment of the proactive experiences themselves and relevant research on the process of human growth and development.

Is it Possible?

It will seem to some that the model proposed here is too idealistic and too far removed from the day to day activities of most counselors. We think not. Dr. Hathaway, in this same program, will enumerate the proactive programs already initiated at one counseling center. On a more general level, we feel that there are a variety of methods and approaches by which this growth center model might be implemented or developed. We are increasingly aware of the potential for human growth in groups. We have found that the only prerequisite for developing a variety of group experiences is a simple room, be it an office, a waiting room or even an empty hallway. By providing a large number of group experiences of varying focuses and content, and by use of the student newspaper and bulletin boards, we have found no dearth of student and faculty responsiveness.

Secondly, most counseling centers already have formal or informal relationships with various academic departments. Enlisting the aid and cooperation of such departments in developing coordinative programs for graduate and undergraduate assistantships serves both needs of increasing student involvement and providing an educative experience. Similarly it is with student personnel offices and resident halls wherein the needs of both the growth center and outreach offices can be enhanced and fulfilled. We have found most student and campus groups to be very responsive to communications from the center. We have even opened a time during each week for which we use to develop and initiate contact with such groups and organizations.

Education at all levels is dedicated to the development of competent and complete human beings. It is time for counselors, who have special skills for increasing human effectiveness and self-actualization, to bring these skills actively to bear upon the pressing needs of the college community as a whole. It is time for counselors to re-examine the use of their professional time, and to consider new approaches by which they may utilize their professional skills in a more pervasive and productive manner. To wait until the institutions we serve request it; to delay until all of the waiting lists are cleared; to procrastinate until a specific problem arises that we can then react to will absolutely ensure that change will never occur.

ARE YOU REALLY DOING ENOUGH?

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